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STATE FOR EUR/RUS, EUR/RPM, EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [RS](#) [NL](#)  
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/OSCE: PRESSING RUSSIA TO ABIDE BY  
SPIRIT OF OSCE COMMITMENTS

REF: STATE 153309

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer,  
reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The GONL shares our concerns regarding the Government of Russia's decision to significantly restrict the ODIHR observation mission for the upcoming Russian parliamentary elections to 70 persons for short-term observation only. MFA Special OSCE Advisor Tony van der Togt said Dutch PM Balkenende raised Dutch concerns with Russian President Putin during his recent visit to Moscow. According to van der Togt, the GONL also believes the Russian position sets a negative precedent for ODIHR election monitoring in general, and specifically for ODIHR observation of the 2008 Russian presidential elections. Further, the Dutch fear others -- such as Uzbekistan -- may use the same strategy in limiting ODIHR's election observation missions. Van der Togt discussed these issues with polmiloff on November 9. End summary.

¶2. (C) Van der Togt said the GONL categorically does not agree with the Russian proposal presented in September 2007 to place ODIHR under the purview of the OSCE Permanent Council. The Dutch agree that ODIHR possesses an independent mandate, and should be able to determine what is needed for meaningful, effective election observations. Placing ODIHR under the Permanent Council's consensus requirement "destroys the credibility of ODIHR's election monitoring mission."

¶3. (C) Van der Togt said the GOR is well aware of Dutch concerns regarding the restrictions placed on the upcoming ODIHR election observation mission to the Russian parliamentary elections in December 2007. According to van der Togt, Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende pushed President Putin on these restrictions during a one-on-one meeting in Moscow on November 7, but to no avail. Specifically, Balkenende called on Putin to issue visas for ODIHR election observers as soon as possible to allow them to carry out their mission.

¶4. (C) Given the "late hour" and impending elections, van der Togt suggested there was not much ODIHR could do, except make the restrictions under which it worked known in its after-election assessment statement. He suggested that Moscow's strategy -- in addition to restricting access to the upcoming Russian presidential election -- could be used by other countries like Uzbekistan to limit ODIHR election observation missions. Van der Togt said he was disappointed that Spain, as the OSCE chair, was not doing more to push back on Russia in this regard. He was skeptical Spain would be able to bridge the gap between the Russian proposal to place ODIHR under the Permanent Council and the EU's

counterproposal essentially strengthening election  
commitments.

Arnall